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Faces of Kremlin Propaganda: Dmitri Peskov

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Dmitri Peskov has served as Vladimir Putin's **spokesperson** since 2008. In this capacity, he has played a key role in propaganda and disinformation campaigns to cover up the Kremlin's links to the 2006 polonium poisoning of former Russian intelligence officer **Alexander Litvinenko**, the 2018 Novichok poisoning of former Russian military intelligence officer **Sergei Skirpal** and his daughter Yulia, and the 2020 Novichok poisoning of Russian opposition leader **Alexei Navalny**. In all these cases, official and independent sources have debunked the Kremlin's disinformation and established the Kremlin's direct responsibility. Serving Putin has been lucrative for Peskov, and despite being a civil servant for his entire career, he and his family are now **multimillionaires**.



Before Putin launched his unprovoked and brutal war of choice against Ukraine, Peskov repeatedly **denied** Russia had any intentions to invade its neighbor. He falsely **asserted** that Russia did not pose a threat to

Ukraine, that Russia had never attacked any other nation, and that Russia would be the **"last country in Europe"** to think about starting a war. Attempting to discredit Western media reports that exposed the Kremlin's invasion preparations, Peskov called them "provocations," an "unfounded fomenting of tension," **"Western hysteria," "irresponsible fakes,"** and **"maniacal information insanity."** Russia's war in Ukraine validated the media reports and undermined Peskov's credibility.

Whitewashing the Kremlin's Atrocities in Ukraine

As Russian military forces withdraw from parts of Ukraine and redeploy elsewhere, the world is learning about the Kremlin's atrocities across the country. Human Rights Watch and other independent sources have **documented** many instances of summary executions, mass rapes, and looting of civilian property, concluding that Russian military forces were committing war crimes. In **Bucha** and many other suburbs of Kyiv, **graphic evidence** of widespread murders and torture of civilians has emerged, with some shot at close range, and others with their hands tied or their flesh burned.

Despite these clear, factual, and irrefutable accounts, Peskov has been one of the key implementers of the Kremlin's **standard disinformation playbook** of denial, lies, and obfuscation. The Kremlin reacted to the global outcry following evidence its forces committed war crimes in Bucha by first **denying** any involvement in the massacre, and then propagating several false narratives to hide the truth. Echoing **disinformation** from Russia's Ministry of Defense that "not a single local resident suffered from any violent actions" under Russian occupation, Peskov **claimed** that the "calendar sequence of events do not testify in favor of these allegations." He said **the accusations were "groundless,"** describing the discovery of the mass killings as a "well-staged tragic show" and "a forgery in order to try to denigrate the Russian army." Even after **The New York Times** and **Reuters** independently confirmed that civilians in Bucha had been killed when Russian forces were controlling the town, based on a review of videos and satellite images, Peskov **insisted** that the killings were a "result of a staged falsification." On April 5, The New York Times **published** a video taken in early March showing Russian armored vehicles firing several high-caliber rounds at a bicyclist in Bucha. **Independent analysts** and other **media outlets** have also

debunked Russia's disinformation about the Bucha atrocities.

Imposing Costs for Peskov

On March 3, the United States **imposed sanctions on Peskov**. Australia, Canada, and the European Union (EU) have also sanctioned Peskov. On March 11, the U.S. Department of the Treasury also **sanctioned** three of Peskov's immediate family members, who live **luxurious lifestyles** incongruous with Peskov's civil servant salary, and likely built on the ill-gotten gains from Peskov's connections to Putin. According to the Department of the Treasury, members of Peskov's family have a real estate empire worth more than \$10 million, a number of luxury vehicles, and travel regularly on private aircraft and yachts.

While some say that it never pays to lie, in Peskov's case it certainly seems like it did.

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